

Thompson

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fully invested in public service. Thompson won her spot two years ago in a contested race, and she threw herself into it - until life had other plans for her.

She got the news that she'd been elected the same weekend she had other big news in her life.

"The day before my election, my husband and I got the best news of all," Thompson said. "After years of struggling with infertility, we learned we were pregnant with twins. It was a weekend filled with celebrations ... although my dad still couldn't believe he had a 'politician in the family.'"

But for Stacey and Clay, it was the beginning of a long and hard road.

"Later that year, our dreams came crashing down with the loss of our twins," she said.

One of the babies died at five into her term - the other at six. They were premature and unable to survive on their own.

"Needless to say, our world stopped turning and I really had a hard time just facing each new day," Thompson said.

The last two years, Thompson said, have been spent trying to get by ... and still serve the Bullard citizens.

"They have been the most heart-wrenching, most-difficult, faith-testing, soul-searching years of my entire life, and there have times in those two years, especially in the months following the deaths of our twins, that I literally did not think I could go on one more day."

But, she said, she found the strength.

"Somehow, we press on. I prayed for God to allow me to just keep putting one foot in front of the other each morning and to help me to take care of my husband and my older children -- that's all I cared about at that time -- not my house, myself, my work, or anything else, only them."

But Thompson and her family persevered - and now - in addition to her other two girls, they have a new one at home. But not before they mourned.

"I remember kneeling in front of the tiny coffin at the funeral and thinking I didn't have the strength to stand back up," she said. "I have never felt more helpless or small. Since that time, we have been blessed with another pregnancy and after a very complicated nine months, a beautiful baby girl."

Those things hampered her service, she said, but she's come out of it ready to work with the rest of the council to accomplish things. And, she said, it was never a question whether she would file for the seat she fought hard for two years ago.

"Not running again never entered my mind," she said. "Two years ago I didn't really know what to expect, I only knew that I wanted to make a positive impact in my community."

Before that time, she said - with an admission that she was incorrect -- she always thought people who held public office probably had a "hidden agenda or didn't live in the real world or didn't face real people problems like me."

But now she knows better. "What I've learned since my time in office is that my prior perception was wrong," she said.

"The current council is the most professional, dedicated, forward-thinking group of people I've ever had the pleasure of working with."

"This council truly has the best interests of Bullard and its citizens at heart, and I am honored to be a part of what is happening in Bullard at this time. The growth that we have and will experience in the coming years will change our city's landscape forever. It is a very exciting time in Bullard."

That's where her new resolve comes into play, too.

"Due to everything my family has endured in the past two years, I have not been able to accomplish as much as I would have liked to since I have been in office, so for me there was no question ... run again, focus now that I am more able to do so, and keep moving forward towards our goals as a council," she said. "I am proud to have been a part of the council that has brought our city so far in improving our water services to our residents. Not only have we improved our existing water/sewer services, we are putting the wheels in motion to be able to serve when these new housing developments/commercial sites come on board and the growth continues to come. And it is coming."

When asked what she believes the city will face in the future, she said it's about smart growth.

"Our council will continue to face what we've been facing -- keeping up with the explosion of growth in our area. Keeping our

heads above water with infrastructure ahead of the impending growth is absolutely crucial for the success of our city at this point," Thompson said. "We have to continue to grow smart."

And she believes the citizens and council are on the same page.

"The formation of the Bullard Economic Development Corporation -- initiated by the council and approved by citizens -- was one of the best things we could have done," she said. "This group really focuses on finding ways to attract new business to Bullard, which makes us grow, which improves our tax base and the cycle continues -- all for the improvement of Bullard."

She said Bullard City Manager Larry Morgan deserves a lot of credit, too.

"We are extremely lucky to have Larry as our city manager as he is always pounding the pavement and promoting Bullard," Thompson said. "Larry is always thinking ahead of the game and trying to make things happen."

"It is extremely refreshing to see a city manager and a city council work in harmony towards common goals."

Thompson is also using her talents to help better the city with grants.

Since funding is scarce and the budget is tight, she knows how to get improvements paid for.

Her last few jobs have included working for non-profits - including executive director for Tyler Junior Achievement and PATH - both non-profit organizations.

So she writes grants. And she's good at it.

"Municipalities, much like the non-profit sector, are historically underfunded," she said. "They look for grants to augment or fund projects that wouldn't otherwise be possible."

The money is everywhere, she said, but it's difficult to locate and even more difficult to acquire.

Federal grants - while rich in funding - are among the most tedious to write and the guidelines are stringent.

In her stint with PATH, Thompson wrote and was awarded a grant for \$750,000 in federal money to build or improve rental housing for low-income citizens in Tyler.

Currently, Thompson is writing a grant to General Mills that - if funded - could help keep improvements going in the city's park.

"It's a matter of time and research," she said. "There's lots of grants the city could take advantage of, and I enjoy doing it."

But she's independent, as well, not shying away from controversy or afraid to speak her mind.

"I'm not afraid to buck the system if I feel any decision doesn't benefit the majority of the citizens," Thompson said. "I've got my own thoughts and my own vision, and every elected official is beholden to the citizens."

But she said the citizens have a responsibility, too.

"I would urge citizens to become informed and to get involved," she said. "If they read something in the paper that they have a question about, don't understand, or have a comment about, come to a city council meeting or contact one of us."

"Make your feelings known on issues so we can bring those feelings/concerns to council meetings with us."

She cited last week as an example.

"A story ran about the fire department and the council being at odds about the \$1 that citizens get charged on their water bills," she said. "Let us know how you feel about that \$1 on your bill."

She said experience affects your perspective.

"I personally don't mind paying the \$1 extra each month, but then again, my house burned down when I was a kid," she said. "My family walked away with what we

were wearing, so my perspective is probably a lot different than someone who hasn't had that life experience."

"Let us know your thoughts. As I said when you elected me the first time, my phone number is in the book. It's still there."

Stacey's husband, Clay, is Market President for Franklin Bank in addition to his service as president of the newly formed BEDC.

The two have three daughters: Morgan, 14, who attends Kings Academy Christian; Landry, eight, who attends Bullard Elementary; and Kennedy Grace, 4 months.

She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of North Texas in Denton, and she and her family are members of Marvin United Methodist Church, Tyler.

After years of working outside the home, Thompson's career has taken a new route.

"After the birth of our third daughter, my husband and I have made the decision that I would transition to the role of stay-at-home mom for the first time since I've been out of college. In all of my years in the corporate world, I have never worked this hard," she said.

Thompson has spent six years volunteering with PATH's Brown-Bag Delivery Program, which delivers bagged groceries to elderly and/or homebound folks every month - something she and her family do together -- and three years with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Grants Committee.

She is an active member of the Junior League of Tyler for three years and a past member of United Way of Tyler/Smith County

Continuing Education Grants Committee. Thompson was also a troop leader for Junior Girl Scouts and a past member of the Bullard ISD site-based decision making committee.

After all Thompson has been through, she said she and Clay are excited about their future and Bullard's.

"While we were going through all of the hard times with losing the babies and the six month hospitalization trying to get our new baby here, there were days that I just wanted to roll over and die and quit anything and everything that I was involved in. I didn't want to see people, talk to anyone, I was tired of being poked, prodded, medicated, and scared to death that it would all crash down again at any minute," she said. "In those times, and there were many, I told myself that I just could not quit. How in the world could I quit when my husband and I try so hard to teach our children to honor your commitments, keep your word, be a trustworthy person, be a good person... that when life comes at you hard, that you get back up, brush yourself off, take a deep breath and keep moving forward."

"Setting a good example for my children was more important to me than caving in to the despair I felt on the inside. My wonderful husband, who I have learned, had a much stronger faith than my own, just let me grieve in my own way and was there to lift me up when I needed it ... and carried me when I needed to be carried."

"Not only have I kept up my involvement, but we -- as a family -- have increased our involvement. We are both very committed to and excited about the growth of Bullard now and in the future."

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